

# 'We could only watch helplessly'

## Chaos ensues in city centre as giant tree falls in storm, leaving one dead

**KUALA LUMPUR:** "We could only watch helplessly as he slowly faded away."

That was the cry of an onlooker as a motorist, trapped under a giant tree that fell along Jalan Sultan Ismail, died some five minutes later.

Muhammad Tariq Haikal, 24, said he was across the road when strong winds and heavy rain started at around 2pm.

"Suddenly, I heard a loud crashing sound and saw the tree falling. It was quite chaotic as we rushed to help those who were trapped in their cars," he said when met at the scene.

Unfortunately, he said, they could not save the victim who was trapped in a Mercedes-Benz.

Two others, including a Swedish woman, were rescued but both were injured.

Mid-day traffic in the city centre came to a halt for hours and both bus and monorail services were disrupted after the tree toppled over during a thunderstorm.

A total of 17 vehicles were affected when the more than half-a-century-old tree fell, leaving three people pinned in their vehicles. They had to be extricated by City Fire and Rescue Department officers.

"The 47-year-old man was pronounced dead at the scene while a 26-year-old e-hailing driver, who suffered multiple injuries, was handed over to paramedics at the scene," the department's assistant director (operations) M. Fatta M. Amin said.

Fatta added that the fallen tree also damaged a bus stop.

According to Muhammad Tariq, a tree branch had pierced through the passenger door of the Mercedes-Benz and pinned the driver's head to the seat.

He was conscious for about five minutes.

"He was pinned in such a way that we could not do anything to get him out of the car," he said, adding that it was a traumatising experience.

The 72-year-old Swedish woman was the e-hailing driver's passenger, said Dang Wangi Deputy Supt Nazron Abd Yusof. "Both have been taken to Hospital Kuala Lumpur for medical treatment," he said.

The fallen tree blocked all lanes on the busy Jalan Sultan Ismail toward Bukit Bintang and also affected the KL Monorail track.

Fatta said they received a distress call at 2.19pm.

"A total of 27 personnel along



**Tragedy strikes:** Rescue teams in action cutting the fallen tree in Jalan Sultan Ismail near Concorde Hotel. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star



with four fire engines and four emergency medical rescue service vehicles were deployed to the scene.

"Our personnel immediately began work to extricate the motorists who were pinned in their vehicles," he said in a statement.

Fatta said the personnel were deployed from the Titiwangsa, Jalan Tun Razak and Sentul Fire Stations.

Rapid KL said in a Facebook

post that there would be delays on the route due to the fallen tree between the Bukit Nanas and Raja Chulan stations.

Rapid Rail Sdn Bhd, in a statement, said there would be no Monorail service between the KL Sentral and Medan Tuanku stations until further notice.

"Our operations team has activated feeder buses to and from KL Sentral and Medan Tuanku," it said, adding that a feeder train

would also operate between Titiwangsa and Medan Tuanku (Platform 1).

It said announcements had been made through its official social media platforms and at all Monorail stations to notify passengers of the disruptions.

"Rapid KL is working with the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to resolve the disruption as soon as possible," it said.

Jalan Sultan Ismail has also

been closed and will only be reopened once all clean-up work is completed.

"We advise all motorists to use alternative routes and avoid using this route for the time being," said Supt Nazron.

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